A SHORT EXAMINATION OF A Discourse CONCERNING EDIFICATION.

By Dr. *HASCARD.*

Where it is inquired, how well the Author of the said Discourse hath proved, *That it is not lawful for a Man to go from his Parish Church to Meetings, that he might better Edifie.*

In a Letter to a Friend.

2 Cor. 12. 9. *But we do all Things (Dearly Beloved!) for your Edifying.*

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An Anſwer to Dr. Scot's *Caſes againſt* Diſſenters, *concerning* Forms of Prayer. *And the Fallacy of the Story of* Commin *plainly Diſcovered.*

A SHORT EXAMINATION OF A Diſcourſe CONCERNING EDIFICATION.

Honoured Sir,

I Have received your exceeding *Civil Letter*, with the Diſcourſe that you favoured me to ſend along with it, which was doubly acceptable to me. *Firſt*, As a *New Book*, few of which come to us (living at ſuch a Diſtance from your *Metropolis.*) *Secondly*, With reſpect to the *Argument* of it. *A Diſcourſe concerning Edification*, muſt be acceptable to every one who knoweth it to be his Duty, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. *To grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Which is in *Engliſh Edification.* You deſire my Thoughts concerning it, which I ſhall freely give you.

Whether it is lawful for any Man to forſake the Communion of the Church of England, *and to go to the ſeperate Meetings, becauſe he can better Edifie there.* This he ſaith *is Unlawful*, and to make it plain, he ſaith Two Things muſt be firſt conſidered.

1. *What ſort of Perſon this is that asketh this Queſtion.*
2. *What he meaneth by Edification.*

As to the Firſt, He ſuppoſeth the Perſon, *not to Judge any Thing unlawful in the Communion.* This Sir will make his Queſtion to concern very few (not one of an Hundred amongſt *Diſſenters.*)

By *Edification*, he means, he ſaith, *An Improvement of his ſpiritual Condition in the full Latitude of it.* Theſe are Words large enough, comprehending *Knowledge* in the Underſtanding, *Faith* and *Obedience* reſpecting *the Will*, and *Warmth*, or *Zeal*, in the Affections, we agree that *Edification* indeed is nothing elſe. The Apoſtle calls us Gods *Temple*, his *Building*; and *Edification* ſignifies nothing elſe, but a *building up in Chriſt*, in *Faith*, and *Love*, in *Zeal* and *Holineſs*; and is the ſame Thing with what St. *John* calls the Souls *proſpering*, 1 John 3. 1. An *increaſing* with the *Increaſe of God*, Col. 2. 19. (Sir) I cannot underſtand, how it ſhould be unlawful for a Man to do any Thing for this End; for his Soul can never *proſper*, nor *increaſe*, nor *grow* by any *ſinful Act* without doubt: I do conceive therefore, the *Author* hath miſtaken his Queſtion, which ſhould have been of *what* is lawful to do, not for *better edifying*, but upon *pretence* of it; for there is no doubt, but any Thing is lawful for *better edifying*, God can be by nothing more glorified, nor can any Thing more tend to the ſaving of our own Souls (which are the two great Ends of a Chriſtian.)

But Sir, to State this one Queſtion, he hath begged two others.

1. That

1. That *Diſſenters Meetings* are *Separate Meetings.* Suppoſe Sir, People meet together in the Church of St. *Andrews* in *Holborn*, and another Congregation meet at St. *Giles in the Fields*, a Third in *Cheapſide*, and that none of theſe People ever go to any but their own Church, are they therefore *Separate Meetings*, when they all hear the ſame Scriptures Read, Sing the ſame *Pſalms*, hear the *ſame Doctrine* (though in other Words) and Worſhip God by the ſame Acts of Worſhip, *Prayer*, *Praiſe*, Preaching and Hearing, Adminiſtring and Receiving the ſame Sacraments; how are they *Separate Meetings?* Did ever any call the *Dutch*, and *French Churches* meeting oft-times in the Pariſh of *Broad-ſtreet*, Separate Meetings, becauſe they go not to hear the Miniſter in *Broadſtreet?*

2. He alſo aſſumes, That they forſake the *Communion of the Church of* England; how doth that appear, many of them oft-times come to the Pariſh Churches, and join with the Congregation in *Prayer*, *Praiſe*, *Hearing*, *Receiving the Sacrament*, thoſe that do not, yet holding the *ſame Faith*, and performing the ſame *Specifical*, though not the ſame *Numerical Acts* of Worſhip, that the *Parochial Churches* do; do no more forſake the *Communion of the Church* of *England*, than the Pariſhioners of St. *Andrews Holborn* forſake the Communion of the Church of *England*, becauſe they never are at *Bow-Church*, or that at *Ludgate.*

But (Sir) we will for once admit, that the Meetings the People go to are *Separate Meetings.* 2. *That they wholly forſake the Church of* England, yet if they do it, *becauſe they can edifie there better*, I do think it not *lawful* only, but *neceſſary* alſo; for that Man doth not believe there is a God, or doth not know he hath a Soul; or doth not know his Chief End is to *Glorifie God*, and that his Souls Intereſt is his moſt valuable Intereſt, that doth not believe he may Separate from any particular Church, that he may better *edifie* elſewhere.

I must confess Sir, when I read the *Question*, as it is stated by the *Author*, I was quite startled at his *Negative Determination* of it, and very desirous to see the *Arguments* by which he could prove it.

But when I came to consider them, *p.* 2. I was satisfied; for his first Reason is, *Because there is no better Edification to be had in the Separate Meetings, than in the Communion of the Church of* England. This he proveth,

1. *Because Her Articles of Faith are those which our* Dissenters *themselves allow:* Upon this he enlargeth, *Page* 3, 4.

2. *Because she laies a necessity upon a good Life*, p. 4, 5.

3. *Because she is fitly constituted to excite Devotion*, p. 7, 8.

4. *Because she hath an excellent Order, and Discipline*, p. 8, 9.

But Sir, all this will not do, nor will prove more than half a Reason.

But *Page* 10. He adds, *This Constitution is used, and managed in the best way by the Pastors of our Church to edifie the Souls of Men.* This he proves.

1. *Because the Pastors of our Church have strict Commands laid upon them so to do*, p. 11.

2. *That these commands are obeyed by the Pastors of our Church, and they do all things in it to Edification*, p. 11, 12.

Before I come to speak to this distinctly, *&c.* we must consider, What *Communion* it is with the Church of *England*, which is required; and for the withdrawing of which *Dissenters* are stigmatized with the unintelligible Names of *Schismaticks* and *Separatists*. Is it for their not agreeing with the Doctrines of Faith

Faith expreſſed in the Thirty Nine Articles? Or becauſe the Doctrine of our Church preſſeth a Neceſſity of an Holy Life in Order to Salvation? Or becauſe ſhe is fully conſtituted for Devotion? *&c.* There is nothing leſs true. Do they Separate ſo as they will have no Communion with any of the Miniſters *of the Church of* England, in *Praying* or *Hearing*, &c. Neither is any thing of that true, as to Multitudes of *Diſſenters*? But the Communion required, *Is a Communion with the Pariſh Miniſter in all Ordinances*; if they will not, they are counted *Schiſmaticks* and *Fanaticks*. So that admit all he ſaith to be true, as to the firſt Head, yet if every *Pariſh Miniſter* doth not *Pray*, *Preach*, *adminiſter Sacraments*, *manage his Paſtoral Charge*, &c. to the *beſt Edification*, his Argument holds no more, than if one ſhould argue, that becauſe a Carpenter lives in a Pariſh, hath admirable Timber laid by him, therefore I am bound to uſe him and no other, to *build my Houſe*, whether he knows how to uſe it yea or no, yea though I plainly ſee he doth not.

2. Again Sir, they that know any thing of *Souls*, know that though they be equal, as to their *Faculties*, yet they are not ſo as to their improved Capacities and Abilities; one Miniſter may be the fitteſt to improve me in *Knowledge*, *Faith*, *Love*, &c. that is the moſt unfit Man in the World to improve another, the Apoſtle hath taught us, that ſome *need Milk*, others *ſtrong Meat*. A Learned Man may be the fitteſt to improve another Mans Soul in *Knowledge* (which by the way is the Foundation of *Faith*, *Love*, *Obedience*, orderly Zeal) who is as Learned as himſelf, that may be the moſt unfit to improve a poor Countrey Mans Soul, that cannot apprehend his Depth of Reaſoning, nor his Latinized Stile, nor his Concealed Method, nor is able to carry away Three Lines of his Diſcourſe. So as this Author hath a very hard Task to prove; *viz.* *That every Pariſh Miniſter, obeyeth the commands of the Church, and doeth all things in Prayer, Preaching*, &c. *to the Edification of all the Pariſhioners*. But Sir, I ſhall not prejudge him, this is only to tell you, what we muſt expect from the *Author*, if he thinks to prove his great Undertaking, this being Premiſed, let me now go back to his Third and Fourth Page.

1. I ſaid Sir before, that we own all the *Doctrines of Faith*, contained in our Creed and Thirty Nine Articles; we grant them *Short* and *Plain*, but that they are ſo fully explained, that nothing can be done further, to make them intelligible to the meaneſt Souls. I cannot ſay, if you look Sir into the *Syſteme* of *Confeſſions*, you will ſcarce find any ſo ſhort as ours is. The People had need have a very able, and painful Miniſter, that ſhall improve ſufficiently in Knowledge by them.

2. We like very well Sir, of what our Church determineth, as to *Good Works* in the Eleventh, and Twelfth, and Thirteenth of Her Articles of the Thirty Nine, in theſe Words,

ART. 11. *We are accounted Righteous before God, only for the Merit of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt by Faith, and not for our own Works and Deſervings. Wherefore, that we are juſtified by Faith only, is a moſt wholeſome Doctrine and very full of Comfort, as more largely is expreſſed in the Homily of Juſtification.*

ART. 12. *Albeit good Works, which are the Fruits of Faith cannot put away our Sins, and indure the Severity of Gods Judgments, yet are they pleaſing and acceptable to God in Chriſt, and do ſpring out neceſſarily of a true, lively, Faith, inſomuch that by them, a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a Tree diſcerned by the Fruit.*

ART. 13. *Works done before the* Grace *of Chriſt, and the* Inſpiration *of his Spirit, are not pleaſant to God, for as much as they ſpring not of Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, neither do they make Men meet to receive Grace, or (as the School-Authors ſay) deſerve Grace of Congruity. Yea rather, for that they are not done, as God willed, and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the Nature of* Sin.

Sir, I think it not worth my Time, to examine how well what the Author ſaith, *p.* 4, 5, 6. agrees with this, here is not a Word

a word of *Vertue*, but the *Grace of Chriſt*, and the *Inſpiration of the Spirit*; and what makes ſome Men ſo fond to change the old Term of *Grace* into the newer Term of *Vertue* (hardly Four Times mention'd by the Apoſtles) I cannot tell, unleſs it be to let us know, they mean no other Things by *good Works*, but ſuch Things as may be done by *common Graces*. In the Articles is not a Word of Good Works being the *Soul of our Faith*, the Articles ſay, they are only the *Daughters*, and *inſeparable Fruit* of our *Faith*; and calls none Good, done before the *Grace of Chriſt*, and *Inſpiration of the Spirit*. But Sir, we do agree, that our *Articles* ſpeak our Hearts as to *good Works*, and we hope we may withdraw from ſuch as teach otherwiſe than theſe Articles, and yet hold Communion with the *Church of* England; becauſe ſuch Sons have themſelves no Communion with Her in that Matter.

3. Neither do we ſay, but that our *Church* is conſtituted fitly enough to excite *Devotion*. Nor ſhall I ſay here any Thing about Her Order, and Diſcipline; becauſe all that is ſaid under this Head ſignifies nothing, if the Second Thing be not made Good, *viz.*

That this Conſtitution is uſed, and managed in the beſt way by the Paſtors of our Church to edifie the Souls of Men.

For Sir, you will eaſily underſtand, that the building of a Soul in *Knowledge*, *Faith*, *Love*, *Zeal*, doth not ſo much depend upon the *Articles of a Church*, its *Rubricks* or *Rules for Worſhip* and *Canons*, as the *Gifts* which God hath given his Miniſters, by which they preſs the *Doctrines of Faith*, and Rules of Holy Life contained in the Scripture, and pour out Prayers for People ſuited to all their Neceſſities; their diligent and conſtant Practice in inſtructing People, and their putting in Execution ſuch Rules as are given for the ordering of People in their Church Duties; neither will what the Author ſaith, *p* 11. make good this Propoſition.

That there are ſtrict Commands under great Penalties laid upon the Paſtors of our Church to do this. What of all this.

So that all lies upon his Second Particular, *p.* 11.

That all theſe Commands are obeyed by the Paſtors of our Church, and they do all Things to ſuch Edification, he ſhould have added what was in his Propoſition, p. 2. *That there is no better in the Separate Meetings, than in the Communion of the Church of* England.

So that Sir, if you obſerve, he muſt prove,

1. That every Pariſh Miniſter preacheth as diligently, and profitably; for the generality of his Hearers Improvement in the *Knowledge of God*, in *Faith*, *Love*, *Holineſs*, *Zeal*, &c. as the Miniſters do in their Meetings. Or elſe Sir, he concludes no more than this. That it is not lawful for meer *Edification-ſake*, for any Pariſhioners to Separate from the Communion with his Pariſh Miniſter, if he doth Preach as *ſoundly*, *intelligibly*, *and profitably*, for Peoples remembrance in Order to their Knowledge, Faith, Love, Holineſs, Zeal, as Miniſters do in Private Meetings. Indeed Sir, I am of his Mind, for I am for a nearneſs of Members of the ſame Church in Cohabitation, where it can be, without a Prejudice to *Edification*; but if Chriſtians cannot ordinarily communicate in all Ordinances with their Pariſh Miniſters, and be equally inſtructed in the Truths of God, or Hear what they underſtand, or in ſuch Methods as they can remember or ſo confirm'd in Scripture, that they can ſearch the Scriptures and find, that Truth which they ſay, or cannot hear the whole Counſel of God, or be warmly preſſed by Arguments to a truly, holy Life in all Converſation, as they can at another Meeting. I think *it is* worth their while, and no Sin againſt God to go where they may.

The

The ſaving and edifying Souls is of more Conſequence than keeping the Limits of Pariſhes.

Now as to this Sir, It is matter of Demonſtration, that every one muſt judge for himſelf; for who preacheth moſt profitably for one, muſt be determined of by him who knows the Capacity of the Hearer, which I am ſure none doth but himſelf; we need not judge of the Learning and Abilities of any Perſon. For he that preacheth moſt learnedly, uſually preacheth leaſt to the Capacity of three Parts of his Hearers; and to a Learned Auditory, the plain Preacher preacheth moſt unprofitably as to his Improvement in Knowledge. I remember Sir, a Story out of *Chryſoſtome*, who tells us, that he heard a *Chriſtian* and an *Heathen* diſputing ridiculouſly. The Matter in debate was, whether *Paul* or *Plato* was the beſt Schollar. The Chriſtian maintain'd *Paul* was, the Heathen maintained *Plato* was. Thus ſaith *Chryſoſtom*, The Chriſtian ſtood to prove what was the *Pagans* Part, and the *Pagan* undertook to prove the *Chriſtians* Part, For the Chriſtian might have ſaid, if *Plato* were the beſt Schollar, it is no wonder he had more Diſciples then *Paul*, and the Heathen might have ſaid, if *Paul* were ſo much the beſt Schollar, it is no wonder he made the Goſpel abound ſo far. The Excellency of a Preacher, or his fitneſs to *edifie Souls*, is not to be determined from his Learning, but from his Pains, and Diligence, and Eye to the End of his Work, as to thoſe People (or the generality of them) to whom he preacheth and his wiſe accommodating Means fit for his End. This requireth the Knowledge of the Circumſtances of the generality of his Auditory, and none but the particular Perſon can judge of him, who preacheth moſt to his particular Edification, *plain Scriptural, practical Preaching* is undoubtedly for moſt general Edification; becauſe Nine Parts of Ten of the moſt Auditories are unlearned, and underſtand not rational Deductions unleſs made eaſie, nor *Scholaſtical Niceties*, or *Criticiſms*, and for thoſe few that can, they are more edified by them in

their Head, than in their Heart; but he that preacheth *ſolidly*, *plainly*, *ſcripturally*, and *practically*, may edifie the beſt Hearers in their *Faith*, *Love*, and *Obedience*, and *Zeal*, which is the beſt *Edification*; for Men may have a great deal of Notion, and yet periſh eternally.

Sir, That there is generally in our Pariſh-Churches, more *ſolid*, *plain*, *ſcriptural*, and *practical Preaching*, fitted for the Capacity and Remembrance of the generality of Men and Women that come to hear, than there is in the *Nonconformiſts Meetings*, will not eaſily be allowed by any that commonly heareth both. Let, Sir, Men be never ſo *learned*, if in popular Diſcourſes, where they are ſpeaking to Five hundred Men, will ſpeak to Five; that is, to the Underſtanding of a very few: I do not believe, but the reſt may go away and hear ſuch as they underſtand better, and remember what they ſay. But there need no more words in this Caſe, it is moſt apparent, that he muſt know another very well, that can know what Diſcourſe will *edifie* him beſt, and that no Body can poſſibly underſtand, or judge that, but himſelf; ſo as this Argument is at its length.

Sir, he cometh *p.* 13. to what he calls his Second Argument to prove this Propoſition, *p.* 2.

That it is unlawful for any Men to forſake the Communion of the Church of England, *and go to the ſeparate Meetings, becauſe he can better edifie there.*

Becauſe that thoſe who uſually make this pretence for Separation, do commonly miſtake better Edification.

This is, Sir, a way of Reaſoning, which I cannot underſtand. I cannot imagine how any Perſon ſhould ever be able to prove, that a *Man may not go to another Church that he may better edifie. Becauſe ſome, or many miſtake the nature of Edification*, doth it follow, Sir, that becauſe ſome miſtake

miſtake it, therefore none knoweth it, or *none can know* it, or none *that truly know the Nature of it may purſue it?*

But really Sir, the *Author* of that Diſcourſe ſeemeth to know it ſo well, that I think we may all take his own Notion of it, and agree with him, *p.* 2.

That it is an improvement of our ſpiritual Condition in its full latitude.

Let us build a little, Sir, upon ſo good a Foundation.

The *Edification* of a Soul, Sir, is, as a *noble*, ſo a very large Building, and comprehends an increaſe in *Faith*, *Love*, *Obedience to the Will of God*, with an *increaſe in holy Affections*, &c.

The Foundation of this large Building muſt be *Knowledge*, a knowledge of the Will of God revealed in Scripture, both as to things to be *believed*, and to be done. Hence the wiſe Man, *Prov.* 19. 2. tells us, *That the Soul ſhould be without knowledge, is not good.* The Apoſtle ſaith, *Rom.* 20. 14. *How ſhall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?* And *how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* And *Col.* 3. 10. he tells us, *The new Man is renewed in knowledge.* And 1 *Col.* 9. the Apoſtle prayeth, That Men may be *filled with the knowledge of the Will of God in all Wiſdom, and ſpiritual Underſtanding.* And this to that end, *that they may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God.* And we are commanded in 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. to *grow in Grace*, and *in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* How, Sir, Men ſhould miſtake an *increaſe in knowledge*, (which is the firſt Stone in this Spiritual Building) for an *healing of Fancy, and a ſtirring of Humours*, I leave to you, Sir, to judge: It is as bad a Miſtake as that of an *Apple* for an *Oyſter*.

In

In his thirteenth Page he ſeemeth to think, that the Duty of keeping an ordinary Communion with the Pariſh-Miniſter, (for that, or nothing, he muſt mean by his Phraſe of *our Church-Communion*) is a plainer and greater Duty, than attending our *Edification*, becauſe he thinks that is *diſputable*, *doubtful*, &c. Of this, Sir, I hope he ſhall never perſwade me, nor you, until he hath perſwaded us, that it is better for us to keep to a piece of *Civil Order*, than to look after the *Salvation of our own Souls*; and if this were true, an eaſie exchange might be made for a Soul.

In his 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, he hints us of three Miſtakes Men may have as to Edification.

1: *When they take nice and ſpeculative Notions, for great edifying Truths:* Such as conjectural Notions about the *Situation of Paradiſe of old*, or Hell now; or *about the Length of the Sword that guarded Paradiſe*; or how the Spirits *above ſpend their time*, of *Behemoh*, *Wranglings of the Schools*, &c. To make this Buſineſs ſhort, Sir, Go to your *Pariſh-Church* a-while, and to the next *Meeting as long*, and let this be the Teſt; conclude, that where you hear moſt of theſe Diſcourſes, there your Soul is *leaſt edified*. What this Author ſaith here, is a great Truth, where there is moſt of theſe Diſquiſitions, there is leaſt *Edification*.

2. A ſecond Miſtake he thinks is, *When Men take the Opinions of Parties, for undoubted Truths, eſſential to Salvation*. What here the Author means, I cannot imagine: Certainly there is no Truth neceſſary to Salvation, but what is the *Opinion* of ſome *Party* or other. If no Truth be neceſſary to *Salvation*, but what is agreed by all Parties, I am afraid we ſhall find nothing at all neceſſary, or very little. Poſſibly the *Doctrine of the Trinity* (if we ſhut out the *Socinians* from the number of Chriſtians) hardly any thing

thing elſe. But, Sir, to make this Buſineſs alſo ſhort, our Author ſaith, *p.* 16.

> *That the Notion or Explication of* Faith *and* Spirit, Church *and* Grace, Juſtification, Regeneration, Converſion, Adoption, *and other things of like nature, are generally deficient in our Church, from thoſe of the Separation.*

And indeed he ſaith true, that theſe are the Doctrines wherein Miniſters that preach at *Meetings*, differ from many of thoſe that preach in *Pariſh-Churches*, (yet not from all, but the moſt of them) but not from the *Church of England.* (Sir) again, make your Ears your Judges, read over diſtinctly the 39 Articles, and the *Iriſh Articles*, and our *Homilies*, particularly thoſe about *Juſtification*, and *Good Works*, and *Images*, then hear Minſters on both ſides, and conclude, that thoſe are to be preferred as to *Edification*, that moſt truly and faithfully preach according to thoſe *Articles* and *Homilies*, we will abide by that Teſt. His laſt Miſtake is,

3. *In taking ſudden Heats and Warmths for Edification:* As to that, let them anſwer that are concerned, *p.* 18. that whole Page is but *reflexive*, and upon ſo falſe a Foundation, as I am not willing to trouble my ſelf with conſidering it, or to foul my Fingers with ſuch a Dunghill of meere words.

In his 19th *Page* he comes to what he calls a third Argument to prove it unlawful for Perſons to leave their *Pariſh-Churches* for *better Edification: Becauſe* (as he pretends) *it will cauſe endleſs Diviſions.* Here, Sir, we muſt examine,

1. The *Truth of the thing.*

2. The *proper Cauſe of the Effect*, uch an Effect will certainly follow.

Admit

Admit, Sir, that in the ſame Family, ſeveral Perſons ſhould find it better for the Improvements of their Souls in *Knowledge*, *Faith*, *Love*, *Obedience*, *holy Zeal*, to go to ſeveral Pariſhes to hear their Miniſters, or to ſeveral Meetings, what diviſion is here? It is this Day done in a thouſand Families, all the Members of which yet live in a perfect Unity one with another; the Wife dearly loves the Husband, and he again his Wife; the Children truly honour the Parents, and the Parents as truly love their Children; the Servants honour and obey their Maſters, they are as tender of their Servants.

I pray, Sir, as to this point, let your Eyes again here be your Judges: See what Families are more decently united, than thoſe in which you will obſerve this different Motion when they go to hear. And, Sir, there is obvious Reaſon for it; it ſpeaks Men to uſe ſome Conſcience and Reaſon of their own, when they cannot be guided by the meer Dictates and Examples of others; and it is moſt certain, that thoſe who live moſt up to the Rule of Scripture, and Square of Reaſon, make the beſt Correlates in any Relation; and thoſe the worſt, who are led by Humour, or the meer Dictates and Wills of others.

But admit, Sir, *Diviſion* be the conſequent of Perſons (in the ſame Pariſh) going to hear in ſeveral places, for *better Edification* (as we ſee it is) will this prove it *unlawful* for People to go? Juſt as much as it argueth, Chriſt's coming into the World (neceſſary for the Salvation of Mankind) unlawful, becauſe himſelf tells us, *Mat.* 20. 34, 35. That *he came not to ſend Peace, but a Sword; For I am come to ſet a Man at variance againſt his Father, and the Daughter againſt her Mother, and the Daughter-in-Law againſt her Mother-in-Law.*

Suppoſe

Suppoſe a few particular Perſons in a Pariſh, (who tho' themſelves blind, yet will undertake to judge of Colours) through their Peeviſhneſs or Ill-Nature, or their Pride and Ignorance, will have all Men to be of their Laſt, and to do as they do, or they will quarrel with them, nick-name them, purſue them in all Courts of Judicature, never let them be quiet, *&c.* doth this conclude, that thoſe who are thus hunted, do any ſinful thing? It will rather be a preſumption of the contrary. Diviſion is no neceſſary Conſequent of Peoples not going to their *Pariſh-Church*. What hath my Neighbour to do with my Soul, further than to *admoniſh* me, if he ſeeth Sin upon me? Muſt every Man cut his Hair, or Beard, in the ſame Faſhion, becauſe elſe his Neighbour will call him *Prick-ear*, or *Roundhead*, and ſtrike him over the Face: Or if he doth not, muſt he ſin? I am not to be charged with a ſinful *Effect* of my Action, (or Conſequent rather) which floweth from the Malice and Corruption of another's Heart, upon my doing what I believe to be my Duty.

I cannot, Sir, but I muſt obſerve to you, that ſtrange paſſage of his, *p.* 20. where he calls it a fatal Day, when ——*Liberty ſhould be given to every Man to chooſe his Paſtor.* A thing he knows ſo evident in Scripture, ſo plain in all the Practice of the *Primitive Church*, and ſo conſonant to all Reaſon and Religion, as nothing can be more.

It is an Argument that Men and Women are debauched into a lamentable Opinion of their Souls, that can poſſibly think, that they ought not to have as much Liberty to chuſe Paſtors for themſelves, as they will challenge for a Shooe-maker to fit their Feet with Shooes, or for a Taylor to fit their Bodies with a Suit of Cloaths.

4. Sir, The Author's laſt Argument is fetched from the *Diſcouragement this would give to an honeſt, truly Chriſtian Miniſter.*

This, Sir, ſuppoſeth, that all who inhabit within ſuch a Pariſh, are properly that *Miniſters Flock*, who preacheth in that Pariſh-Church. How is that proved? Nor can it be true, 'till the Right of another be *proved, to chooſe a Paſtor for my Soul.*

But, Sir, I have been young, and now am old; I never yet knew a *faithful and profitable Preacher*, want an Auditory. I have indeed known many a learned and honeſt Man, want the Company of his own Pariſhioners, but his Church hath been filled up with others. I have alſo known many a learned and good Man, who wanting *Elocution*, or an happy Method, or being weak in preaching Parts, hath wanted an Auditory, but let a Man be *Conformiſt*, or *Nonconformiſt*, if he were a Man ſound in Matters of Doctrine, holy in his Life, and but of tolerable Preaching Parts and Abilities, I never knew him want an Auditory. I dare ſay, no ſuch Perſon this Day wants, none eſpecially that is choſen by the People; either by a firſt Election, or an after Submiſſion.

There ever was, and while this World ſtands there will ever be difference in the *Miniſters Auditories*, 'till God makes all Miniſters equal in *Gifts* and *Abilities*. Neither do I much underſtand the Diſcouragement of a *ſmall Flock* (ſuppoſing the Miniſter to have a Livelihood) the fewer Souls a Miniſter hath under his Charge, the leſſer his Account will be at the Day of Judgment: To whom many Souls are entruſted, of him will many be required.

But (ſaith our Author) *what if our Paſtor be idle, or remiſs in his Duty, or corrupt in the Faith, and teacheth Error*

Error inſtead of ſound Doctrine, and we have no means of Edification: What muſt we do? Muſt we take in Poiſon inſtead of Food, or not be fed at all?

A very conſiderable Queſtion; to which might have been added: *What if he be of an unholy Life, who builds with one Hand, and deſtroyeth with the other?* To whom People are ready to ſay when he reproveth one, *Phyſitian heal thy ſelf.* How can we think *you believe, as you ſpeak*, when we ſee you do not live as you ſpeak?

But to the Queſtions as formed by himſelf, (Sir) the Author replies, *To be ſure you muſt not run into Schiſmatical Separation. It is more tolerable to go to other Congregations of our Communion, that may be irregular, but it is not ſchiſmatical.* What doth he mean by a *ſchiſmatical Separation?* Shall the following Words expound him? *It is more tolerable to go to other Churches of our Communion.* What is the meaning of that? Are not all Congregations, where the ſame Doctrine is preached, and the ſame Worſhip, I mean Acts of Worſhip, performed, of the *ſame Communion?* Doth the Difference in the Miniſters Habits, and Words in Prayer, make a different Communion?

But is it lawful to go to other Pariſh-Churches? No, ſaith our Author, that is *irregular*; and if it were not ſo, ſurely Men ſhould not be made ſuch deep Sufferers for that venial Sin.

But he thanks God, *We have a Government, which upon a juſt and modeſt Complaint, will quicken the Lazy and Negligent, correct the heretical Paſtor, and reſtore to you true Edification.*

I have not a Word, Sir, to ſay againſt this: Judge as you ſee what is true or falſe in theſe Things, is Matter of Demonſtration, and therefore there need no Words about it.

The Author, Sir, concludes his Diſcourſe with the Recommendation of two things to us.

1. *That if we fancy any Defects in our Government, we ſhould not hence conclude, that we have not ſufficient Edification in the Church to ſave our Souls.*

I know, Sir, you cannot but obſerve, 1. How the Author hath forgot his Queſtion, which he, *p.* 1. ſtated concerning *better Edification.*

Sir, I do not think any ſober Diſſenter will deny, *that Men and Women may be ſaved in the Church of* England. I know many of them do think, that many will be ſaved in the *Popiſh Communion*, where they have no better Light to make uſe of, than they have in *Spain* and *Italy*, and live up to their Light; doth it therefore follow, that they muſt not withdraw Communion from *Rome?* I do not here compare the *Church of England* with the *Romiſh Synagogue*, I only bring this as an Inſtance, that a Sufficiency of the Means of Grace to bring Men to Heaven, is not enough for pious Souls to look after; if it were, there needed no Exhortations to *grow in Grace.*

How comes the Queſtion to be altered here, *p.* 22. Or this to be uſed as an Argument not to ſeek for *further Edifying*; that in the *Church of England* there is ſufficient *Edification*, (Means of Edification, I preſume he means) to ſave Souls, have Chriſtians no more to do, doth this Author think, than to look juſt to get to Heaven? Surely their Buſineſs is in the firſt place to *glorifie God*; and that can be no otherwiſe, than by bringing forth much Fruit; *John* 15. 8. *Herein*, ſaith our Saviour, *is my Father glorified, if you bear much Fruit.* There are ſome *whoſe Work ſhall be burnt, and they ſhall ſuffer loſs*, but yet *they themſelves ſhall be ſaved; yet ſo as by Fire*, 2 Cor. 3. 15.

Every

Every good Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned ſo to live, ſo to walk as he may moſt glorifie God, and be *ſaved*, yet not *ſo, as by Fire.*

He goeth on,

"*If upon a nice ſearch, and critical enquiry, they think they have found ſome little Flaws and Defects, improper Phraſes, doubtful Sentences, and ſome ſmall Omiſſions in the Matter of our Prayers and Diſcipline; yet let them not conclude, that theſe can weigh in the Ballance againſt the black Sin of Schiſm and Separation; and all its ſad Conſequents, which is excuſed by nothing elſe, but Terms of Communion plainly ſinful.*

Sir, We muſt give them leave to load Practices, they do not like hard Names, when they are not able to convince the Authors of them of any Sin. I could wiſh, that we could hear more of the *black Sins* of *Drunkenneſs* and *Whoredom*, and *prophane Curſing, and Swearing*; but they can never Name *Schiſm* and *Separations*, but they muſt repreſent that as a *black Sin*, yet they will never tell us in any intelligible Dialect, what this ſame *Sin unto Death* is? Wherein it lies? Which of the Ten Commandments it oppoſeth, *&c*? Let them firſt tell us, *What the Church is*, and open how we ever were united to it, and then ſhew as plainly, how we are ſeparated from it, and we will cry *Peccavimus*, if we cannot ſhew them, that the Terms upon which we muſt have had Communion with it, were ſuch as we had juſt Reaſon to believe ſinful.

But Sir, when *Diſſenters* plead *Separation* lawful for *better Edification*, it is not ſo much with reſpect to the *Worſhip*, and *Government*, as to the Preaching moſt ordinary in it; not that there are not excellent Preachers that do *Conform* to the *Church of* England; but with all there are

are others, many of which alſo may be very *Learned* and *good Men*; but yet not have the Gift of *Preaching*.

Edification is much more concerned in the *Doctrine* and Preaching, which Men ordinarily hear and attend, than it is in the *Form of a Churches Government*, and in the *Prayers* uſed there (though they alſo influence it) in a much lower Degree doth, for a Knowledge of the Things of God, being the *Foundation* of all Faith, Love, Obedience, or any ſanctified Affection; that Ordinance which moſt contributes to that, muſt neceſſarily moſt contribute to Edification.

It is therefore the Preaching in moſt *Pariſh Churches*, which People look at, as leſs tending to Edification, than what they hear elſewhere, being leſs fitted to their Underſtandings, and Memories; leſs awakening and Operative upon their Affections; if any of them aſſign any thing in the Publick Worſhip, or the Government of the Church, as giving them Cauſe to withdraw their Preſence from the former, or Concurrence with the latter; it is ordinarily of another Nature, not for *further Edification* meerly. Whereas Sir, our Author ſaith, *p.* 24. That he *doth not underſtand*, what it is to be *better ſaved*, or *more ſaved?* We cannot help that, the Apoſtle 1 *Cor.* 3. 15. Will teach him what he pretends to be ſo unintelligible.

His next Councel is *p.* 24. *Let Edification be placed in the ſubſtantial Parts of Religion.*

Sir, We have our Religion yet to ſeek, if *Faith* and *Holineſs*, be not the ſubſtantial Parts of it. There is none that denieth, that *a right Faith*, and an *honeſt Converſation is taught in our Church*. The Queſtion is, Whether they be ordinarily taught in all Pariſh Churches in the beſt Manner for Peoples Underſtanding either, or Improvement in either? They are certainly taught in the

the beſt manner with Reference to Edification, when they are taught ſo plainly as all the Hearers may underſtand them; and what is ſaid, is ſo proved and juſtified from Holy Writ; that their *Faith* (whoſe Object, 'tis not poſſible ſhould be any Thing, but a Divine Revelation) can be founded not in the Wiſdom of Mens fine Words, or fallible Ratiocinations; but in the Power of God, and in the Wiſdom of the Divine Will revealed in his Word.

If the Author Sir means, that theſe Things are taught in our Thirty Nine *Articles*, and in ſome *particular Churches*, all that he can infer is, That it is not lawful for us to divide our ſelves from the *Doctrine of Faith in thoſe Articles*; nor from ſuch *Places* where we dwell, where thoſe *Doctrines* are ſo Preached, if ever we were united to them. If he means, that in all *Pariſh Churches*, *Faith, and Holineſs* are ſo *preſſed*, and *preached*; he will find it denied by many, and impoſſible by himſelf to be proved. I ſee Sir, nothing more in all the Book you ſent me (unleſs Words.)

To draw up all in ſhort Sir.

If all the Miniſters and Chriſtians on the Earth (not apoſtatized to Idolatry) be but one Church, her *Doctrine*, and *Worſhip*, one and the ſame; how is it poſſible, that any ſhould ſeparate from it, who adhereth to the *Doctrine* of it, and lives in the performance of the ſame *Acts* of *Worſhip*, that God is honoured by in every Part of it? For it is certain, that all ſuch Perſons as are Members of it, neither do, nor ever did Worſhip God in the ſame Place, nor by the ſame *Numerical* Acts; nor are under the ſame *external Form* of *Church-Government*, and *Order*: So as there is no pretence of *Separation* from the *Catholick Viſible Church*. I know no other Church, but *the particular Church* of which an individual Perſon is a Member.

Let

Let us conſider that, as ſignifying the *whole Body of Chriſtians wherein we live* (upon which Account we ſometimes ſpeak of a *National Church*) how can a Perſon more ſeparate from that, than from the *Catholick Church* (Sir) who adhereth to the *Doctrine of Faith* owned in it, and ſerveth God in any Part, or corner of it by the ſame *ſpecifical Acts of Worſhip*, that whole Body of People ſerveth God by, and in? For neither do all the People in any Nation meet in the ſame Place to Worſhip God; nor do the Miniſters uſe the ſame Words, in all their Prayers, or Sermons, nor do People uſe the ſame Habits and Poſtures in their Acts of Worſhip: Do they mean the Particular Congregation of which Men are Members? It is impoſſible a Man ſhould ſeparate from a Church in that Senſe who never was a Member of it, and as impoſſible that any ſhould ſinfully withdraw Communion from a Church in that loweſt Notion, that cannot without Sin, have Communion with it, in that, or thoſe Acts in which he withdraweth his Communion. Neither is he to be called a *Separatiſt*, that only withdraweth his Communion from it as to an *human Tradition*, and is yet ready to have Communion with it in every *Divine Inſtitution*.

It is moſt certain that *Chriſt* did ſo, as to the *Jews*, and alſo kept a Communion diſtinct from them, though he did not wholly caſt off Communion with them. *John Baptiſt* kept a Communion with the *Jewiſh* Church, yet ſufficiently reflected on the Corruptions of it; and neither reſtrained his Preaching, nor Baptizing to the *Synagogues* or *Temple*. This ſame thing ſo clamour'd on, under the Notion of the *black Sin* of *Schiſm* and *Separation*, if it ſignifieth any thing more, than a withdrawing frome ſome *Rites*, and *Ceremonies* of no *Divine Inſtitution*, no *Neceſſity*, the *Impoſition of* which, and a *Compliance* with which ſome Perſons judge ſinful; I muſt profeſs my ſelf not in the leaſt Degree to underſtand it, and

if

if it ſignifies no more, which of the Ten Commandments it is oppoſed to. I cannot underſtand, nor how to excuſe him from it, who did the like, yet was *Holy*, *Undefiled*, *Separate from Sinners*.

But Sir, as to what is ſaid in this Diſcourſe, That it is *ſinful* for a Man (agreeing in all the Points of Faith, in all the ſubſtantial Parts and Acts of Worſhip with all Chriſtians in the World, and more eſpecially with all thoſe in the *Nation*, or in the *Pariſh* wherein he Lives) not ordinarily to join in thoſe Numerical Acts of Worſhip which the reſt of the Pariſhioners, or many of them join in; becauſe the *Preaching* and *Praying*, or other Adminiſtrations of Holy Things in that Place, is not ſuch, as he by Experience findeth moſt conducive to the Profit of his Soul, either to convey to him *the Knowledge* of the Things of God, or to *affect his Heart* with *Love* to, and *Zeal for God*. It is of all Things, that which I leaſt underſtand, And (Sir) I hope it is the laſt Thing any ſhall beat into my Head.

If any hath a Deſign upon me (Sir) let him attempt if he can to prove, that I have *Soul*, or if any, yet that Soul (or Thing called ſo) is but the *Craſis* of my Body, no diſtinct Being from it, but ſhall with it *Die* and *Putrifie*, and never with it riſe more, to hear of what I have done in the Fleſh. Or let him attempt, if he can to perſwade me, that I am not with this Soul to endeavour to my *utmoſt* to *Glorifie God*. But I hope he ſhall never, ſo long as I believe *that there is a God*, or that I have an *Immortal Being* within me, with which I ought to glorifie this God (the *Eternal* Concern of which I am above all Things to mind) and in Order to it, to obey God by doing his Will.

Perſwade me, that it is ſinful for me to leave my *Pariſh Church*, and go to hear the Word of God, and join in his Holy Inſtitutions in another Place, that I may more

build up my Soul in the *Knowledge* of God, in the *Faith* of God, or *Love to him.*

Nor indeed (to give this Author his due) (though in his first Lines he pretended to do some such Thing) hath he in his Book at all pursued it; but only proved, that I ought not to go from my *Parish Church* that I may *Edifie more*; when as there is no Place I can go to, where it is possible I should Edifie more; and *suggested* that we do not know what *Edification* meaneth, Having therefore as to the Latter satisfied him, that if himself knows what *Edification* means, we also do; for we understand the same Thing by it, that he means; I hope he will give us leave to judge of the *former*, as being the most competent Judge of what we best understand, and feel the best Effects of; and no more pretend to know better, what Preaching I best understand, and is most suited to my Soul, than he can pretend to know what *Food* best agreeth with my *Stomack, and Digestion*, and serveth best for my Nourishment.

As to this Business of *Edification*, what is said of the *Physitian*, is true of the *Divine*, as the one gives *Physick*, so the other preacheth, *Non ad hominem, sed ad Socratem*, the same *Matter*, and *Method*, and *Phrase*, and *Stile*, is not for the same *Edification* of all that may go to hear.

And this, Sir, is enough, I think, to have spoken of this matter: For it is certain, that all things spoken now-a-days *edifie not*, nor do all things which may in some degree *edifie* some, in the same, or indeed in any degree *edifie* others. Let therefore us have the favour that *Daniel* obtained of *Matzar*, *Dan.* 1. 11. let us have that *Pulse to eat*, and that *Water to drink*, which we find best agreeing with our *Stomachs*, *Concoction*, and *Digestion*; and let it either be judged by God at the end of the World, or by any reasonable Man, after a determinate Number of Years, whether those who are fed with the *King's Meat*, or we that

that have been fed with that Pulſe and Water, be more full of the *Knowledge* of the *Things of God*, more full of *Love to God*, more *pious in our Acts of Devotion*, more full of *Acts of Juſtice* and *Charity*, more exerciſed in a good Conſcience both towards God and Man, from whence this *Edification* will be beſt concluded.

The Sum of all which this *Author* hath ſaid, lies in Four Things.

I. *What is impoſſible to be had, is unlawful to be attempted.* By this *Medium*, he proves, going to Meetings for *further Edification* unlawful. But, Sir, did ever any Man before him reaſon from *impoſſibility*, to *unlawfulneſs of endeavour*? I always thought the Queſtion, (as ſtated by him) ſuppoſed the *poſſibility* of ſuch a thing, as *further edifying*: Beſides, that there are many things *lawful enough* to be endeavoured, which yet cannot be obtained.

Secondly, *If it be not lawful to go to Meetings for miſtaken Edification, then it is not lawful to go thither, for true and real Edification.* This is the Sum of his Reaſoning, *p.* 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

Thirdly, *That which will cauſe endleſs Diviſions is not lawful*: Which is no further true, than thoſe Diviſions neceſſarily ariſe out of the pretended Cauſe. The Goſpel hath cauſed Diviſions, ever ſince it was preached, now more than 1600 Years; and, for ought I ſee, is like to do ſo ſtill: Yet, I hope, it is neither unlawful to preach it, nor to live up to the Rule of it. This is his Argumentation, *p.* 19, 20.

Fourthly, *That which is a diſcouragement to an honeſt and truly Chriſtian Miniſtry, is unlawful.* If he means by an *honeſt Chriſtian Miniſtry*, all Miniſters, or many ſuch Miniſters as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, that *live well*, being *Examples to the Flock of Chriſt*, ſuch as are deſcribed, 1 *Tim.* 3. 3, 4. and

4. and 1 *Titus* 6, 7, 8, 9. (and such the Apostle saith Ministers *must be*, 1 Tim. 3, 2.) and such as *Rule well*, shewing it first in the Government of their own Families, 1 *Tim.* 3, 4, 5. *Labouring in the Word and Doctrine.* He speaks true, for the Apostle saith, such are *worthy of double Honour*, and to discourage such, is unquestionably sinful: But if he means others, it is far easier to prove it sinful to countenance and incourage, than to discourage them.

By this time, Sir, I need not tell you my Thoughts, that the *Hypothesis* of this *Author*, had need of better Arguments than what he hath brought to prove it, and you may be judge of the Truth, of what can be no better proved.

FINIS.